

POL-008: AUSU Food Assistance Program

1. Purpose

The AUSU Student Food Assistance Program supports AUSU Active Members experiencing food insecurity. AUSU recognises that financial hardship can affect anyone, and this program provides assistance with dignity, discretion, and care.

2. Scope

This program is available to AUSU Active Members residing in Canada. Support is offered regardless of program type or geographic location. AUSU provides assistance tailored to individual circumstances, including Members with dependents or caregiving responsibilities. Gift cards or vouchers are selected based on the applicant's location and access to stores to ensure practical and equitable support.

3. Policy Statement

The AUSU Student Food Assistance Program provides compassionate, confidential support to Active Members in Canada who are experiencing food insecurity. Assistance is limited to domestic Members due to funding and logistical constraints. Support is not guaranteed and is subject to available resources.

4. Definitions

Active Member: An AUSU Member who meets the criteria set out in the AUSU Bylaws, including current enrollment in at least one 3-credit AU course, payment of AUSU membership fees, and good standing with AUSU.

Applicant: An Active Member residing in Canada who submits a request for assistance.

Food Insecurity: Limited or uncertain access to adequate, culturally appropriate, and nutritious food due to financial or other resource constraints.

Gift Card / Voucher: A store-specific card provided by AUSU to enable the purchase of groceries or other essential food items.

Household Size: The total number of individuals, including the applicant, who share the same primary residence and pool resources for food and living expenses.

Dependents: Individuals, such as children or family members, for whom the applicant has primary care or financial responsibility.

Care Responsibilities: Ongoing duties related to the support or supervision of dependents, including children, elders, or individuals with disabilities.

Scoring System: AUSU's confidential evaluation process used to assess eligibility and determine the level of support, based on criteria such as household size, income, and food access challenges.

Waitlist: A roster of eligible applicants who are not immediately selected for support but may receive assistance in a future cycle depending on available funding.

Fiscal Year: AUSU's official accounting and reporting period, as set by organizational policy.

Program Oversight: Monitoring and evaluation activities ensuring the program operates fairly and effectively.

5. Eligibility & Assessment

- a. Support amounts are tailored to each applicant's situation. AUSU uses a confidential scoring system to evaluate applications based on the following factors:
 - i. Household size
 - ii. Financial hardship
 - iii. Food access challenges
 - iv. Care responsibilities
 - v. Enrollment status
- b. Support may be provided in the form of grocery gift cards or store-specific vouchers, depending on the applicant's location and access to stores.
- c. Applicants must have earned a minimum of three (3) AU undergraduate credits in addition to meeting the Active Member requirements set out in the bylaws.
- d. All support issued through this program is non-transferable. Applicants may not sell, trade, gift, or otherwise transfer gift cards or vouchers to any other individual.
- e. Gift cards and vouchers issued through this program cannot be exchanged for cash, store credit, refunds, or any other monetary equivalent.
- f. AUSU does not reimburse grocery or household purchases under any circumstances. Support is provided exclusively through AUSU-issued gift cards or vouchers.
- g. Gift cards and vouchers must be used exclusively for groceries and essential food items. AUSU may issue cards with category restrictions to ensure appropriate use.

6. Support Amounts

- a. General guidelines:
 - i. Larger households may receive increased support

- ii. Higher-need applicants are prioritized for expedited assistance
 - iii. First-time applicants receive special consideration
- b. Typical support ranges from \$100 to \$250, depending on need and household size.

7. Program Integrity & Audits

To ensure fairness and responsible use of resources:

- a. AUSU may conduct random audits of applications.
- b. Applicants may be asked to provide proof of dependents or other documentation.
- c. Providing false or misleading information may result in disqualification from current and future support.

8. Application Intake & Processing

- a. Applications are accepted continuously and processed monthly.
- b. Each cycle uses a scoring system to rank applicants based on need and eligibility.

9. Issuing Schedule

- a. Allocations are issued monthly.
- b. The number of cards issued per cycle is capped based on available funding and inventory.
- c. Issuing decisions are made based on score thresholds and available resources

10. Waitlist Management

- a. Applicants not selected are placed on a waitlist.
- b. Waitlisted applicants are reevaluated each cycle.
- c. Scores may be adjusted based on updated data or policy changes.

11. Reapplication Policy

- a. Selected students may reapply later in the fiscal year if circumstances change or additional support is needed.
- b. Reapplications are treated as new submissions but flagged for continuity.
- c. Duplicate applications within the same cycle are not permitted.

12. Fiscal Year-End Protocol

- a. All waitlisted applications expire at the end of the fiscal year (September 30).
- b. A new application cycle begins; all applicants must reapply.
- c. Historical data may be retained for reporting and analysis but does not carry forward eligibility.

13. Program Oversight

AUSU conducts an annual review of the program, in alignment with POL-006: Program Evaluation. Reviews assess application trends, support distribution, and program impact. AUSU may publish summary findings as part of student services reporting.

14. Confidentiality

All application information is confidential and handled in accordance with AUSU's Records Management Framework and privacy requirements. Only individuals authorized by Council policy may access application data.

15. Program Suspension or Modification

AUSU may suspend, modify, or discontinue the program at any time by Council resolution.

16. Policy Responsibility

Council is the sole authority to approve, amend, or rescind this policy.

17. Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

a. References:

This Policy References:

- POL-006: Program Evaluation

This Policy is Referenced by:

- None

b. Policy History:

- Original Approval Date: January 22, 2026
- Last Review Date: January 22, 2026
- Review by Date: July 2029